

## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 258

By Finney L

A RESOLUTION to congratulate the members and ministers of Bethlehem Number One Missionary Baptist Church upon the occasion of their Church dedication.

WHEREAS, the churches of our nation have been an integral part of our history as a people and have had an unparalleled impact in forming and maintaining a stable and just society; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should recognize those venerable religious institutions and their congregations that, through their unflagging capacity for love, dedication of spirit, and faith in God, strive to enrich the lives of people in their communities; one such dynamic and historic community of faith is that of Bethlehem Number One Missionary Baptist Church, the members of which celebrated their Church dedication during the week of March 21 - 25 of 2007; and

WHEREAS, Bethlehem Number One Missionary Baptist Church is believed to have been constructed in 1848; its first building was a log structure built about 1887; and

WHEREAS, in 1928, Rev. S.C. Long, Jr., the son of the first known pastor of the church, Rev. S.C. Long, Sr., was called upon to lead Bethlehem, which he served faithfully for thirty-five years; during his leadership, the Church joined a District Association with the objective of improving Christian education, and was remodeled in 1948; and

WHEREAS, in 1964, the Rev. J.R. Richmond was called to the Church and ministered for twelve years during which church membership grew and a new sanctuary was built and opened on April 23, 1967; and

WHEREAS, after a long search and much prayer, God led Rev. W.J. Rupert to Bethlehem in which he served from October 12, 1976, to April 1, 1979; and

WHEREAS, current pastor, Rev. David L. Perry, was called to lead Bethlehem's flock in the fall of 1981, serving as an inspiration to his congregants and the overall community; he has placed much emphasis on Christian education with his dedication to providing opportunities to study the Word of God; and

WHEREAS, under Rev. Perry's astute leadership, the Church ministries have flourished, with the addition of Wednesday morning Church school, a nursery, and a Children's Church; the expansion of its Youth Ministry with Youth Interacting, Exalting, and Learning Discipleship (YIELD); and the enhancement of its Music Ministry with the addition of both a youth and young adult choir, as well as a male chorus; and

WHEREAS, Bethlehem's Church Center was remodeled and served as a fellowship hall and, in June of 1999, construction began on the Family Life Center; dedication services for this facility were held on May 28, 2000; and

WHEREAS, from this thriving fellowship, several men were called into the ministry as ministers of the gospel, including Rev. Neely Moore, Rev. Homer Fuller, Rev. Johnnie Senter, Rev. Add Senter, Rev. Jim Senter, Rev. Charlie Moore, Rev. Sylvester Neely, Rev. Ira Bailey, Rev. Michael Day, Rev. Darrick Theus, Rev. James Vincent, and Rev. Fred Perry; other ministers include Ira Taylor, Jr., Jerry Moore, William Westbrook, Ronald Bass, Derron Williams, Antonio Neely, Calvin Lee, and Antoine McKinnie; and

WHEREAS, with the able guidance of Rev. Perry, the above mentioned gospel ministers, and Bethlehem deacons, Chairman Jerry Butler, Assistant Chairman David McCarley, Charlie Day, James Franklin, Percy Givens, Floyd Greer, Jimmie Moore, James Neely, Thomas Tyson, William Neely, and Ira Taylor, Sr., the Church has steadily grown; and

WHEREAS, in May of 2006, the former Church structure was torn down and the groundwork laid for a new structure that opened on November 26, 2006, with a seating capacity of more than 500, an extended pulpit and choir stand, a sound room with modern technological equipment, a large classroom, a new center for children, a children's Church classroom, an extended pastor study and lounge, a conference room, and a larger finance room; and

WHEREAS, the devout members of the congregation of Bethlehem Number One Missionary Baptist Church have faithfully striven to carry out God's work in the world and they

remain excited about what the Holy Spirit has in store for them, serving as a testimony to Ephesians 3:20, "God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us"; and

WHEREAS, as a powerful tool in the service of the Kingdom of God, Bethlehem Number One Missionary Baptist Church is truly one of the great religious institutions and catalysts for positive spiritual change in our State and Nation, and the members of this exceptional congregation should be appropriately honored for their exemplary service to their fellow Christians and to the good people of Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we join in honoring and celebrating the dedication of Bethlehem Number One Missionary Baptist Church, thank the good people of this historic congregation and their ministers for their notable service to their Lord and the State of Tennessee, and wish them much continued success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.